



The Reflector

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God's Word: Our Window to Heaven and Mirror of Our Soul.

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“Preach the man, and not the plan.” “Spiritual transformation comes from not looking at the rule, but looking at the ruler.” “You’re too busy looking at the Bible, rather than looking at the GOD of the Bible.”

What do all these catchphrases have in common? They are all phrases that we have either heard or read that proclaim the same basic message. Various versions of the first we have heard all of our lives from denominational circles and some liberal brethren. The second we have recently heard favorably quoted by brethren. The third was told to us by a brother who had it said to him.

The message conveyed, intended or not, is that to properly magnify God and His Son, we need to de-emphasize the word. From what I can ascertain that by looking past the word we are supposed to be able to somehow forge a closer personal relationship with Deity. Also involved is the misguided notion that strict adherence to the word is not nearly as important as the supposed personal relationship to God. As we have said, that denominational preachers have for years preached the “the man, not the plan” concept. In recent years, it is being warmed over by some of our younger preachers’ use of the clever catchphrases like we quoted above.

These catchphrases also encourage the contention that doctrine and adherence to the biblical pattern should not be the basis for fellowship, but rather our common faith in Jesus

as the Christ. And that our salvation does not depend on our keeping the rules (commands), but rather our love for the Ruler.

And taken to its extreme the idea makes one question the very nature of the New Testament writings. So we hear people talking about how the writings of the apostles were never meant to be “law,” but kind of love letters. While all who repeat these phrases may not take them to such extremes, they are nonetheless sowing the seed for others to do so.

The Primacy of the Word

In reality, the only true relationship that we can have with the Lord is through his word. If one is looking for some kind of “personal” familiar relationship similar to the relationship we have with a close friend or relative in whose physical presence we are, he is not going to find it. Unlike physical relationships, our present relationship with the Lord is a “by faith” and not “by sight” relationship. (2 Corinthians 5:7). Closeness to friends and relatives involves their being in our physical presence and our having physical interaction with them. When one tries to forge that same kind of closeness to Deity, either he will be disappointed or he will exercise a fertile imagination to make himself “feel” or “sense” the same kind of closeness and personal presence that he feels in his close physical relationships.

Our “by faith” relationship with the Lord causes us to love him whom we have not seen (1 Peter

1:8), touched, nor heard personally. It is forged only through the word given to us by the Lord, the word of faith that was preached by inspired men (Romans 10:6-8, 17). We can only know the Lord through that means. All we know about his attributes, his nature and his will is what is said in the word. You cannot minimize the word of God and get close to him – you can only get close to him by having the “word of faith” close to you “in your mouth and in your heart” (Romans 10:8). You don’t get near to him by trying to bring him down from above nor up from the beneath so you can experience a personal presence and interaction. You get near to him by having the word of faith near you – in your heart (mind) and your mouth.

As our title suggests, the word is our window to heaven. We can only see heaven and its inhabitants through the eye of faith opened by the word of God. All we know about them, for certain, is in the word of God embedded in our minds. It is also through the word that we really know ourselves, thus making it the mirror of the soul (see James 1:25; Hebrews 4:12).

The only way we can get to and please “the man” is to obey “the plan.” This is the only way we can avoid his vengeance when he comes again (1 Thessalonians 1:7-9). The only way to stay near to him is to abide in his doctrine (2 John 9-10). Is it any wonder that Jesus is called “the word?” (Cf. John 1). Or that Jesus said, “if you continue in my word, then are you truly disciples of mine.” (John 8:31). Or that John wrote, “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. (1 John 5:2-3).

It would be extremely difficult to overemphasize the importance of the word. It is through it that we can “see” and “know” God this side of heaven. Any claims to a deeper knowledge of God than what we get through the study of the word is bogus. It is only through the word that we know God’s plan for us. It is only through the word

that we know what God does and has done for us. This is why we are not interested in hearing one “testify” as to what God has done for him, but rather let him tell us what the word teaches that God does for him.

When one gives testimony of his subjective experience and view of God, he is only doing what thousands do regardless of their doctrinal beliefs or religious affiliations. One is just as credible as the other. Even the Muslim can subjectively “testify” what an “awesome” god Allah is and what he has done for him. But when one points to the Scriptures as to who God is, what he can and does do for his children, then he is offering objective credible evidence for his hearers to consider.

Likewise, the only way that we can know the will of God is through his word. The way that we love God is by keeping the commandments of his word. (1 John 5:3). So we should be suspicious of any effort to distance, to whatever degree, the God of the Bible from the Bible of God. We suggest that one spend his time searching the Scriptures to learn all that he can know of God rather than spending time trying to capture just the right feeling that he imagines that one should have toward God. When one gets to know the God of the Bible through searching the Scriptures that “just right feeling” about God and his relationship to him will take care of itself. He will know that God is “awesome” because of what the word reveals rather than what his heart feels. He will know that the heart is deceitful because the Bible says so (Jeremiah 17:9) He will know that the word is a lamp unto his feet and the light unto his pathway because the Bible says so. (Psalm 119:105). He can confidently sing the little children’s song: “Jesus loves me, this I know, because the Bible tells me so.”

Do you want to truly magnify God, then magnify His word: “I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.” (Psalms 138:2)#

Differences in Bible Miracles and Modern Miracles

Hiram Hutto

While Jesus was on earth he made some very startling claims. He claimed to be divine, and the Jews so understood him (John 5:18; 10:33). He claimed to be the Son of God (John 10:35-37). He claimed to be the Messiah (John 4:25-26) and the Savior of the world (John 14:6). But anyone could make these claims. We were on a call-in radio program where a man would occasionally call denying that Jesus was the Messiah, and claiming instead that he was the Messiah. However, Jesus did more than simply claim to be the things noted, he proved that claim by the miracles he performed. Let's consider these.

1. Power over nature. He stilled a storm (Matthew 8:26-27).
2. Power over material things. He fed 5,000 men with a few loaves and fishes (Luke 9:10-17).
3. Power over all manner of diseases (Matthew 8:16).
4. Power over the spirit world (Matthew 8:16).
5. Power over life and death (John 11:14-44).

These are not merely powers, but ones performed in a confirmation of his claims (John 20:30-31).

The apostles, too, were able to perform miracles, not to prove that they were divine, etc. - for they never claimed such but, in fact, they denied it (Acts 14:11-15). Their miracle-working power was given to them to confirm the word which they were preaching. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation; which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will" (Heb. 2:34). The Bible shows that after the apostles received the commission to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15), they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them,

and confirming the word with signs following" (Mark 16:20).

From these facts and many more, it may be safely concluded that there is no need for miracles today. The Bible has sufficient proof in writing that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:30-31), and the word of God having been adequately confirmed is sufficient. Anything we need to know about life and godliness is furnished completely when we take all the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3). Although this is true, it does not keep many people from claiming to perform miracles today. But there is a vast difference between what is done in our day and the miracles performed by Jesus and the apostles. Let us consider some of these differences.

1. The miracles of the New Testament were not limited to healing. As already noted, there was power to still the tempest. Yet in 1950 a storm blew Oral Roberts' tent down injuring 50 people, most of whom were treated at local hospitals, not by Roberts. Where have you heard reliable evidence of turning water into wine? Not even A. A. Allen, noted healer, could have done this, though he died of acute alcoholism. Who today is feeding 5,000 men with a few loaves and fishes? For the most part, today's "miracles," in sharp contrast to these, are limited to "healings" and these are not of any organic illness. We are told by those who are supposed to know that most of these illnesses are in the mind, so when Roberts or others convince those who think they are ill that they are not sick, they are "healed" but not miraculously.

2. The apostles were not "selective" in their miracles or in their healings. An advertisement for an Oral Roberts campaign states "Prayer Cards Given Out at Afternoon Service ONLY" (emphasis his, HH). Anyone who has attended such services should know why this is

done - to screen out the undesirables. Whoever read where those who were healed by the apostles needed a prayer card?

3. Miracles in the New Testament were not conditioned on the faith of those being healed. How much faith did dead Dorcas have (Acts 9:36-40)? The lame man who was healed by Peter in Acts 3 was not even expecting to be healed, much less believing that he would be. Yet today, those who are not healed are told that they do not have enough faith. What a compound tragedy this is! The sick are not only left with their sickness, but are made to feel guilty because they are the ones to blame for lacking in faith!

4. As in Acts 3:7 the lame man was healed "immediately." If you have attended many "healing" campaigns, no doubt you have witnessed people, being "worked into a lather" with much emotion, exertion, and sweating over the ones to be healed. Not so in that done by the apostles.

5. The miracles of the New Testament were so powerful that even the enemies of the apostles admitted "that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest unto all that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it" (Acts 4:16). In our day, numerous ones could deny the "miracles" that were supposed to have been wrought, and they have denied them and that publicly. From the Alabama Baptist (9/12/74), there is this headline: "Noted Surgeon Follows Up Reports on Faith Healings, Says He Found None." The article tells how Dr. William A. Nolen of Litchfield, Minn., noted surgeon and author of the book, *Healing: A Doctor In Search of a Miracle*, wrote, "After following up on the cases of 26 patients who thought they had been 'healed' at a famous faith healers religious service here, says he couldn't find a single cured patient in the group." The book is even more extensive than that with the same results. At various times some of our brethren have offered high financial rewards for proof of any genuine healing of organic illnesses. To my knowledge, they have never had to pay off.

6. After the apostles were baptized in the Holy Spirit, there were no failures. Acts 5:16 is typical, "they were healed every one." Instances could be multiplied where Oral Roberts and others failed frequently, some even dying after they had been pronounced "healed." Jack Coe had an ingenuous reply to this. He claimed that he had healed many people who did not know they had been healed for they still had the same symptoms!

7. No collections. One of the most obvious differences between today's "healing campaign" and those in the Bible has to do with money. One does not read in the New Testament where the apostles or others took up a collection as a part of their "healing campaign." (In fact, one does not read in the New Testament of "healing campaigns" with all the self produced publicity and high pressure propaganda that is so characteristic of today's "miracle worker"). If memory serves me correctly, several years ago I attended one of these and, before the meeting was over, collections were taken-up 9 times! On the other hand, the Bible tells us that Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none" (Acts 3:6), but he did not follow it up with a collection. Quite a contrast.

8. In the New Testament the apostles performed miracles which confirmed that their teaching was God's revelation. I have never heard a modern miracle worker claim that his teaching is a new revelation that is to be considered as a part of the word of God. But if they are doing what the apostles were doing or if they believe that they are doing what the apostles were doing, their teaching should be considered as much a part of the Bible as that which John or Paul wrote. In this case we would need a "loose-leaf Bible" to which we would continue to add their revelation. After all, Paul is emphatic when he says, "the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37).

From these considerations and many more, it can be readily seen that when today's miracles are compared with what we read in the Bible, there is no comparison!#